

# Current Economic Programs Printed Survey Results: by the *Annual Survey of Communications Statistics Users* Respondent Base

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U.S. Census Bureau  
Current Economic Statistics User Survey

OMB CQM-26 (Rev.5/5/98)

## I. DATA CONTENT

Your answers identifying the survey data you use will help us understand our users' patterns of data use.

1. Which Current Economic Statistics from the Census Bureau do you use? (Mark all that apply.)

### (1) Monthly

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0.0%;	0	None
72.0%;	67	Retail Sales
63.4%;	59	Wholesale Trade
65.6%;	61	Manufacturing/Trade Inventory/Sales
57.0%;	53	Housing Starts
60.2%;	56	Building Permits
57.0%;	53	New Home Sales
54.8%;	51	Value of New Construction Put in Place
37.6%;	35	Housing Completions
30.1%;	28	Expenditures for Residential Improvements
43.0%;	40	New Residential Construction
23.7%;	22	New Mobile Home Placements
51.6%;	48	Monthly Imports and Exports
66.7%;	62	Current Industrial Reports
57.0%;	53	Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, Orders

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Replies 93; Forms 104

### (2) Quarterly

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56.9%;	37	Quarterly Financial Report
84.6%;	55	Current Industrial Reports
6.2%;	4	Federal Assistance Awards Data System
18.5%;	12	Quarterly Tax Survey
12.3%;	8	Quarterly Public Employee Retirement

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Replies 65; Forms 104

### (3) Annual

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79.8%;	83	Annual Retail Trade
81.7%;	85	Annual (Wholesale) Trade
100.0%;	104	Annual Survey of Communications
71.2%;	74	Transportation Annual Survey
75.0%;	78	Service Annual Survey
75.0%;	78	County Business Patterns

45.2%;	47	ZIP Code Business Patterns
51.9%;	54	Statistics of U.S. Businesses
40.4%;	42	Characteristics of New Housing
52.9%;	55	Annual Building Permits
32.7%;	34	New Residential Construction in Selected Metropolitan Areas
53.8%;	56	Annual Capital Expenditures
85.6%;	89	Annual Survey of Manufactures
66.3%;	69	Current Industrial Reports
37.5%;	39	Research and Development Survey
46.2%;	48	Plant Capacity Utilization
20.2%;	21	Education Finance Survey
29.8%;	31	State Tax Collection Survey
13.5%;	14	Annual Public Employee Retirement
26.9%;	28	Annual Survey of Public Employment
26.0%;	27	Consolidated Federal Funds Report
41.3%;	43	State Government Finances
58.7%;	61	Annual Imports and Exports

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Replies 104; Forms 104

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## II. DATA DELIVERY

The Census Bureau is considering use of the Internet as the primary method of data delivery. By completing the following questions, you will help us retain the most essential delivery formats and design the best possible data delivery service.

(4) 2. How do you receive current economic data now? (Mark all that apply.)

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88.2%;	90	Printed Publications	14.7%;	15	FAX
80.4%;	82	World Wide Web (Internet)	13.7%;	14	Direct (E-mail) delivery
52.0%;	53	CD-ROMs	1.0%;	1	Regular mail
26.5%;	27	Diskettes	3.9%;	4	Other

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Replies 102; Forms 104

- visit to Census release library and requests to commerce library.
- Check values by telephone
- also use microfiche in some cases.
- CDRom & Publications in Library
- Subscribe to America Statistic Index on Microfiche

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(5) 3. What format do you PREFER when downloading data for further manipulation? (Mark all that apply.)

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66.7%;	66	Spreadsheet (e.g., wkl, xls, etc...)
33.3%;	33	ASCII delimited
32.3%;	32	Database (e.g., dbf, mdb, etc...)
18.2%;	18	ASCII flat files
15.2%;	15	Retrieve from print or screen and enter manually
14.1%;	14	Do not manipulate data
2.0%;	2	Other

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Replies 99; Forms 104

- Printed, so it's easily read
- Charts and Trends

4. What capabilities do you want on the Census Internet site? (For each line, indicate the degree of your preferences, from 5 [high] to 1 [low].)

(6) a. Direct (E-mail) delivery:

36.0%;	32	5	16.9%;	15	3	13.5%;	12	1
16.9%;	15	4	9.0%;	8	2	7.9%;	7	Don't know

Replies 89; Forms 104

(7) b. E-mail notification:

37.9%;	33	5	23.0%;	20	3	12.6%;	11	1
11.5%;	10	4	10.3%;	9	2	4.6%;	4	Don't know

Replies 87; Forms 104

(8) c. Retrieve/display to screen:

58.2%;	53	5	13.2%;	12	3	5.5%;	5	1
17.6%;	16	4	0.0%;	0	2	5.5%;	5	Don't know

Replies 91; Forms 104

(9) d. Search:

75.3%;	73	5	10.3%;	10	3	0.0%;	0	1
10.3%;	10	4	1.0%;	1	2	3.1%;	3	Don't know

Replies 97; Forms 104

(10) e. Download complete data sets:

78.3%;	72	5	8.7%;	8	3	1.1%;	1	1
6.5%;	6	4	2.2%;	2	2	3.3%;	3	Don't know

Replies 92; Forms 104

(11) f. Download selected data:

80.0%;	76	5	6.3%;	6	3	1.1%;	1	1
7.4%;	7	4	3.2%;	3	2	2.1%;	2	Don't know

Replies 95; Forms 104

(12) g. Software help/tutorials:

25.0%;	21	5	28.6%;	24	3	10.7%;	9	1
19.0%;	16	4	10.7%;	9	2	6.0%;	5	Don't know

Replies 84; Forms 104

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(13) h. Publication-quality printing:

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41.4%;	36	5	24.1%;	21	3	8.0%;	7	1
20.7%;	18	4	5.7%;	5	2	0.0%;	0	Don't know

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Replies 87; Forms 104

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(14) i. Charts and graphs:

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29.7%;	27	5	20.9%;	19	3	11.0%;	10	1
20.9%;	19	4	16.5%;	15	2	1.1%;	1	Don't know

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Replies 91; Forms 104

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(15) j. Geographic maps:

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27.1%;	23	5	16.5%;	14	3	18.8%;	16	1
18.8%;	16	4	16.5%;	14	2	2.4%;	2	Don't know

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Replies 85; Forms 104

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(16) k. Other, please specify:

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75.0%;	6	electronic bulletin board	25.0%;	2	Other
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Replies 8; Forms 104

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- Publications like QFR to be in spreadsheet format or mdb for easy data manipulation after downloading.
  - ACROBAT FILES, which you may include in item h.
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(17) l. Electronic Bulletin Board (To collect write-ins)

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0.0%;	0	5	0.0%;	0	3	0.0%;	0	1
0.0%;	0	4	100.0%;	1	2	0.0%;	0	Don't know

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Replies 1; Forms 104

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### III. DATA USAGE

Your answers describing how you use the data will help us design the most effective Current Economic Statistics retrieval tool.

(18) 5. Do you combine/compare/merge data from more than one source listed in Question 1?

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30.7%;	31	No	69.3%;	70	Yes
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Replies 101; Forms 104

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(19) 6. What time periods do you consider when using these data? (Mark X all that apply.)

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67.7%;	67	5+ years	39.4%;	39	trends up to 1 year
66.7%;	66	trends up to 5 years	0.0%;	0	Other
49.5%;	49	latest 1 or 2 periods			

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Replies 99; Forms 104

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(20) 7. How do you use the data? (Mark all that apply.)

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59.6%;	59	Create value-added products/services
49.5%;	49	Perform patron/client inquiries
19.2%;	19	Republish in newspaper/journal
19.2%;	19	Inform marketing decisions
19.2%;	19	Store reports/printouts for archival purposes
13.1%;	13	Inform investment decisions
10.1%;	10	Locate new sites
0.0%;	0	Other

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Replies 99; Forms 104

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- [none]
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(21) 8. What explanatory information do you consult when using these data? (Mark all that apply.)

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86.5%;	83	Definition of terms
67.7%;	65	Narrative text describing survey results
59.4%;	57	Sampling and estimation methodology
47.9%;	46	Survey design
4.2%;	4	None
4.2%;	4	Other

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Replies 96; Forms 104

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- frequency and availability
  - Comparisons to earlier surveys and/or similar data from other agencies--e.g. census to BEA in one estimates.
  - Census Bureau Staff
  - Phone calls to Census and or DOL
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(22) 9. Do you have any pressing data or information needs that are not currently being met?

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- You should have a central source for sales for all SIC codes. The data could be more timely.
- We are very much interested in unadjusted counterparts of tables 7 & 8 of the FT900 release being made available on internet on the day of release. Publications like QFR also need to be made available in spreadsheet or mdb for us to further manipulate data.
- Yes--Need more timely and more defined (i.e. 4-digit SIC code) SUB-NATIONAL data.
- Monthly RetailSales is no longer in print-- it is time consuming to get it off the internet because of the download time. It's a waste of valuable research time.
- Print publications no longer available, yet there is no notice that the print publication will no longer exist. Impossible to find the exact publication on the Internet so clients can compare and update printed data. Current information available but how long will older information remain available?
- Foreign trade - exports & imports - by 4-digit (data that had been available in "Trades Employment") - without SIC (& soon NAIC), cannot compare trade with domestic activity.
- Data on residential construction; alterations, renovations and conversions; and county level mobile home shipments.
- Selected salaries for selected industries & occupations.
- MCD Business Patterns, Massachusetts is doing away with county government, MCD income estimates.
- Non-residential building permits--number by type of building.
- We use and would like to continue to use retail sales by county data and the merchandise line sales data.
- Number of Mobile Homes & Value of, by state, on a monthly basis. (Currently only published annually) -- Also, by county, if possible.
- Non-residential building permits data and value of new non-residential construction part in place.

- Monthly trade data based on export location.
- Yes--Commercial building permits--Bring them back now!!!
- Current input-output reports; 5 yrs. is too old!
- YES! Bring back non-residential state/local permits authorized! This was a severe loss for interpreting local economic trends. Also, more geographic detail, more frequently.
- Commodity flows data with 3 digit SIC value of shipments between states-The state to state flows.
- Seasonal Population - estimates. More information on affordable housing-market.
- Monthly Retail Sales for U.S. Metropolitan Areas.
- More frequent substate mtg. stats (annual survey is state wide only)
- Household Expenditure Data at State Level.
- Pollution abatement expenditures by SIC
- We want SIC data at the product level by region. Please make every effort to provide locational tags to Canadian & Mexican data. Full country data profiles are not sufficient.
- Would like Government Finance series in print form.
- Non-residential Building permits.
- Place and regional economic data sets in relation to population/race trends.
- Imports and exports by 4-digit SIC. Very important--in print. Publication form--quarterly.
- Geographic Area Retail Sales
- MSA retail sales
- Non-residential construction data outside California! Bring it back!
- We have a need for long historical time series and for long-term forecasts.
- Information about how well the ACES programs capture new business formation and business deaths.
- As a foreign academic library, we are concerned about cost of access.

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#### IV. INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION ISSUES

We will soon begin restructuring the Current Economic Surveys based on the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Your answers will help us ensure that these surveys continue to provide the economic information needed by markets, policy makers, and business people. For more information on NAICS, see the Bureau's web site: <http://www.census.gov/NAICS>.

(24) 10. At what levels of detail do you MOST FREQUENTLY USE industry data classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)? (Mark all that apply.)

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80.0%;	80	4-digit industries (or maximum detail I can get)
50.0%;	50	2-digit major groups
46.0%;	46	Sector totals (SIC division); e.g., Manufacturing or Retail Trade
46.0%;	46	3-digit industry groups
3.0%;	3	NA (don't use SIC-based data)
5.0%;	5	Other

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Replies 100; Forms 104

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- digit SIC product codes
  - Greater detail when available
  - I don't use this much, but others in the agency do!
  - Would like to have 6 or 7 digit SIC
  - D & B's 2+2 system 8 digits
- 

(25) 11. Were you aware that the SIC system is being replaced by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)?

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11.8%;	12	I was unaware of this
22.5%;	23	I am partially aware, but lack details
65.7%;	67	I am aware and understand some implications

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12. Would you like to receive more information about NAICS?

(26) Yes, please send me - (Mark all that apply)

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86.9%;	53	A brochure that explains NAICS	37.7%;	23	Conference announcements
70.5%;	43	NAICS implementation plans	4.9%;	3	Other

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Replies 61; Forms 104

- Send info on NAICS comparability with existing SIC data.
- The reference book of classifications

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(27) No Thanks -

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52.4%;	22	I will check the Census Bureau's web site ( <a href="http://www.census.gov/naics">www.census.gov/naics</a> )
47.6%;	20	I don't need more information about NAICS

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Replies 42; Forms 104

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V. USER PROFILE

Please tell us about yourself so we may serve you better.

(28) 13. Type of organization.

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32.4%;	33	Business	3.9%;	4	Media
31.4%;	32	Government	2.9%;	3	Library
21.6%;	22	Academic/Research	2.9%;	3	Other
4.9%;	5	Association			

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Replies 102; Forms 104

- Information and consulting firm
- Market Research/Publishing
- Library (University)

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(29) 14. Do you work in your organization's library?

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45.1%;	46	Yes	54.9%;	56	No
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Replies 102; Forms 104

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(30) 15. What is your affiliation with the Census Bureau?

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62.4%;	63	None	3.0%;	3	Business/Industry Data Center
16.8%;	17	State Data Center	2.0%;	2	Affiliate Data Center
4.0%;	4	Census Information Center	11.9%;	12	Other

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Replies 101; Forms 104

- State Government Agency.
- Richmond Public Library, BST Dept. 101 E. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23219
- Associate Stat Data Center
- Former Advisory Committee member and CES researcher.

- Cooperator in disseminating permits authorized data
- Census Liason
- Customer
- Depository
- DOC Staff
- GPO Depository
- BEA, U.S. Department of Commerce
- Federal Depository Library

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(35) 20. May we contact you to follow up on this questionnaire?

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84.5%; 82 Yes

15.5%; 15 No

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Replies 97; Forms 104

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(36) Question 21. Remarks:

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- You should include questions on technology usage in your census questions (in the 10 year census).
- It would be nice to have all reports available in spreadsheets format. For any publication reports that contain large tables and data, mdb file format would be an ideal too.
- The computerized data is fine when know exactly which dat you want. It is not so good when you want to know what is available and related information; in this case the printed publication e.g. censu of Manufactures, is far superior.
- The library relies heavily on Census data bu twe have a need for the information in both printed and downloadable (manipulable) formats. The library would purchase both the printed format as well as subscribe to the census website.
- 1). It is important to be able to retrieve data in easy to use formats (spreadsheet or ascii)- "pdf" formats are convenient to print, but difficult to use. 2). Please see question 9. 3). We are concerned about the discontinuity in time series data that will occur with NAICS. The 1987 SIC change was a significant problem-NAICS will likely be much worse. Any help from Census (bridges, publication of data in both classifications) would be a great help to data users.
- A published paper version should always be made available for purchase to the public. Information being available on the internet is nice, yet it is a completely different animal than having a hard copy version of the information. An example: I can receive my new off the internet, but I still prefer to get my newspaper in the morning for reading at my leisure away from a computer.
- When is 1997 Census to be available? Please keep as much of the data in print as possible-- Thanks!
- --But please ask for Deborah Foster.

Thank you.

- The efforts to provide electronic format dat are a vast improvement over paper/hard copy publications. They have increased the accuracy and utility of the data sets.
- The level of detail varies depending on the type of data requested. Mostly county-level data is used because this is what is available.

Although the technology of the internet is available to tie up my phone line browsing for information to print out is very time consumin, whereas a printed report is much easier to access & reference. Not all government entities have the capacity to keep pace with new, faster, computer hardware & software.

- I prefer e-mail contacts rather than phone, as I am frequently not available at my phone for extended periods.
- Being able to download from the web site has generally worked very well for us. The only troublesome aspect is that the page numbers of the PDF documents differ form the page numbers in their table of contents (e.g. - printing page 18 gets you page 12 of the document).

A big "thank you" to the Census specialists who have been most helpful and polite when we've



- called with questions.
- We serve a varied clientele (academic, business, government, and private citizens) and work across many subject. Census data are absolutely vital to us. Our biggest need is for more geographic area detail more frequently (state, county, place, if possible). Users often do not understand the 5 yr. gaps and lag time for the major Economic Surveys that offer such detail, much less the 10 yr. decennial cycle. The internet is a great help in speeding "publication", but we find access is not yet universal. We still download and print entire documents for guide reference and historical purposes. I am concerned about just how long the electronic medi will remain accurate and usable as technology changes. How will the Bureau deal with these problems?
- Please contact ASAP: Bob Davidson, Gov't Information Service Section Palm Beach county Library System Service

3650 SUMMIT BLVD. 33406  
 (561) 233-2600, ext. 164  
 email Robert ID@PB.SEFLIN.ORG

- Would like more detail on Semiconductor Industry (SIC 3674) and SIC 3661 & 3669 communicaitons equipment. Also, computers SIC 3575,3577,3578, 35,79. Would like more details on subcategories in terms of sales dollars and total units sold.
- Data validity in the NAICS project is one of our concerns. Has any provision been for cross checks of the data?
- I received the survey on August 7th-so was not able to return it in the time requested!

Our office is very interested in any information on the implementation of NAICS-as our researchers will be using it a great deal.

- Desperately need this information from NAICs. Emerging technology/company information requested everyday.
- We look forward to working with you on the upcoming Census.
- Please update my address in your records. Thanks!
- We love the Census Bureau! Clear publications indices and ease of search engines on the Internet site are very important to us. Also, choice of how to download data is good, not all users need or can use spreadsheet software.
- Will all Census data be available only via the Internet? My customers prefer printed format. Thank you.
- More documentation and instructions for obtaining data from gohper directories would be helpful.
- I use your "Telephone contacts for Data Users" and phone for help and information--of ten. I am very pleased with the response and helpfulness of all the people at Census, from receptionists to anyalysts. It would be nice to get it regularly. I forget, from year to year, to send for updates, until I notice that some contact names are out of date.
- I like the fact that the Census Bureau Produces many of is documents in the .pdf format, these are easy to print, bind and archive in our library. However, what is even more important to our firm is the ability to manipulate the data, and easily bring it into a data base or spreadsheet. If I had to choose I would prefer the raw data to the printable format.

I might use more of the data listed in question now that I know it exists.

Figure 1: